

Persephone

This is the story of Persephone, and how the seasons were created.

One day when Kore – daughter of the goddess of fertility Demeter – was picking flowers, the ground opened and Hades, ruler of the underworld, rose from the realm of the dead. He had long been in love with Kore and wanted to marry her. He kidnapped Kore and took her down to the underworld.

Demeter wandered the earth in search of her daughter. Finally, the sun, who had seen everything, told her that Kore was now Persephone, queen of the realm of the dead. In her grief and anger, Demeter forbade the flowers to bloom and the grain to grow. Soon the earth became a wasteland and both animals and people starved.

Finally, Zeus, god of thunder and ruler of the other gods, ordered that Hades must return Persephone to her mother. When Demeter saw her daughter again, all her anger drained away and the earth turned green again.

But Hades had tricked Persephone into eating a pomegranate while she was in the underworld, and once you partake of the food of the dead, you can never leave their land. But Zeus said that Persephone had to spend a month in the underworld for every pomegranate seed she ate. She had eaten six kernels, so six months out of every year she must live with Hades.

When Persephone ascends to earth after six months, spring comes. However, when she must return to the underworld during the winter, everything withers as Demeter grieves that her daughter is not with her.